

**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR  
11 RYE STREET  
EAST WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT**

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

**Monday, August 17, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.**

These minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting.

Members Present: Rebecca Talamini, Richard Laborious, Tanya Unsworth, RuthAnn  
Lansner, Jim Richards and Nicole Vacila  
Members Absent: Heather Spencer  
Others: First Selectman Jason Bowsza, Deputy Selectman Marie Desousa,  
Tom Lansner and Noreen Farmer  
Press: None

**I. Call to Order**

Co-Chair Ms. Rebecca Talamini called the Special Meeting to Order at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Meeting: <http://zoom.us/j/3326833563>; Meeting ID: 332 683 3563

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

Everyone pledged allegiance to the flag.

**III. Attendance**

All in attendance other than Ms. Heather Spencer.

**IV. Public Participation**

None.

**V. New Business**

Ms. Rebecca Talamini commented the reason for this special meeting is to discuss options the Board of Selectmen will be discussing or have discussed at their meeting. First Selectman Mr. Jason Bowsza was asked to give the commission a rundown of what has and will transpire as the process continues. Mr. Bowsza indicated he understands a public hearing will be held tomorrow and the Board of Selectmen can either accept the draft presented by the Charter Revision Commission or make suggestions for alternatives to the

Charter Revision Commission. If suggestions are made by the Board of Selectman to the Charter Revision Commission, the commission shall meet and either accept those changes suggested by the Board of Selectman or submit their original report and return it back to the Board of Selectman to either move it to the ballot or reject it. He indicated it is clear the reviewing of the charter is an 18-month process and the commission did the work in half of the time. It is a considerable undertaking and he thanked each of the members for their hard work. The Board of Selectmen understands this is a huge undertaking and this commission has taken a moderate approach trying to revise the charter so the question can be placed on the ballot for the November election. For the question to be placed on the ballot the time is of the essence as there are only 12 days left. Further discussion around the 2% budget increase and if this number is an arbitrary number or if the town needs a more appropriate number or should the 2% not be changed as it is serving the town well. What number would make everyone comfortable.

Ms. Talamini indicated that whatever happens at the public hearing tomorrow, will be hopefully a clear recommendation of what options the commission may need to review. Mr. Bowsza remarked other options may be suggested at the public hearing, if there is another suggestion that may have the consensus of the commission, that option should be heard at the public hearing.

Ms. Nicole Vacila inquired why the commission was meeting this evening as it can not make any decisions until after the public hearing and Board of Selectmen meeting. She has been thinking of a 5% budget increase, but she does not want to kick the can down the road. She would be agreeable to keep to three referendums and if it does not pass, revert to last year's budget.

Ms. Tanya Unsworth agreed with Mr. Richards nothing that the commission has had many meetings rehashing the percentage number. The commission had a meeting with the Town Treasurer who explained the budget and the revenues and it was evident that the budget depends on funding from the State of Connecticut and other variables that the town does not have control over. If the commission kicks the can, the town will continue to move backwards. She thought maybe the idea of having a referendum until it passes might be the way to go.

Mr. Jim Richards commented that putting a percentage number and voting until it passes when the percentage number is fictional is not the answer. The Board of Selectmen do not like the percentage number as they know it is a fictional number. If you decide to go with a percentage number, he felt it should be high like 10% so the voters will have no choice but to look at the budget, other than that he cannot support another number.

Mr. Richard Laborious noted that Ms. Noreen Farmer has entered the meeting and was not in the meeting when the public session was held. He asked if Noreen could make a comment out of order. Ms. Talamini agreed.

Ms. Noreen Farmer, 247 South Water Street addressed the Commission. She has been following the Board of Selectmen about this issue. She is a current member of the Board of Finance and was in the past in 2005 through 2009. She is not sure what happened when the three referendum and percentage took effect, but she believes it had some political as it serves two purposes. The Board of Finance has a responsibility of keeping the budget number down and close to the 2% so it will pass, which is not the greatest idea. In the past, the public would participate in the process, now there is no incentive. The public will either vote yes or not according to the segment they are interested in. Board of Finance must play a more active role in capital improvements and contract negotiations, so it can have a good picture of departmental budgets and the needs of the town. The percentage number is not in anyone's best interest. The Board of Finance should be able to ask a question on then ballet if the voter feels the proposal is too high or too low, then the Board of Finance will have an idea of what direction to go into if they have to present a new proposal to be voted upon. She would like to see the referendum go away as people need to take vested interested in the town, although it is difficult.

Mr. Richards agreed with her comments as he feels the 2% is a failsafe and most people are not worried as they know it will go up 2% after three failed referendums. This is selling a fall sense of security.

Ms. Nicole Vacila agreed with Noreen except for the unlimited referendum as it is a waste of time and money. Three should be enough.

Ms. Tanya Unsworth she would go back to the original scenario three referendums, after third failure goes to the Board of Finance for the final decision. If not, she supports Mr. Laborious' idea of keep going until it passes. She understands the cost, but the townspeople need to come and vote in their budget.

A question about reverting the budget to the previous year's budget as an alternative. Mr. Bowsza noted that would be a problem as he does not see that passing and according to state statutes the Board of Education must be funded a percentage above the last year's budget.

The choices are three referendums and if it fails, returned to the Board of Finance for final decision or have endless referendum until it passes. Mr. Laborious had another proposal of having a threshold turnout for the referendum to be valid. Maybe not the 15% turnout as proposed prior, but maybe 15% plus one.

A lengthy discussion was held regarding the pros and cons of each of the choices. It was eventually the consensus that the decision would not be made at this meeting as the Board of Selectmen are holding the public hearing tomorrow evening and at this time keep with the original report presented to the Board of Selectmen.

**VI. Adjournment**

It was **MOVED** (Laborious) and **SECONDED** (Unsworth) and **PASSED** (6-0) (In favor: R. Talamini, R. Laborious, T. Unsworth, R. Lansner, J. Richards and N. Vacila; Opposed: None) that the Charter Revision Commission adjourns the Special Meeting of August 17, 2020 at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise M. Piotrowicz  
Recording Secretary